

Applejack Gets a Warthog

by Word Worthy

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Summary: A Warthog randomly lands outside Sweet Apple Acres.

1. Chapter 1

"Phew, what a relief that that's finally over," Applejack declared. Her golden orange coat glimmered with sheens of sweat as she surveyed the results of her day of hard work.

The earth pony had outdone herself yet again. The majority of the entire northern orchard had been harvested, and neatly stacked covered baskets of ripe red apples were everywhere in the small stretch of ground in front of the stoop of the Apple Family farmhouse. Above, fuchsia, crimson, and orange tints painted themselves across the sky as the sun began to set over the hills, spelling out the coming of a balmy late summer evening.

"Ah sure did get a work out today. Ah wonder what Granny and sis are whippin' up for dinner," she mused. Her stomach growled as if in response, and Applejack let out a quick chuckle. "Ah hear ya there, sugar cube! Ah must have been running on empty since noon, time to do something 'bout that."

Applejack made her way into the farmhouse, letting the front stable door ramble shut behind her as she stood in the front room. She checked her hooves to make sure she hadn't tracked in anything, shook the sweat off herself, then set her Stetson hat on the nearest rack, which was largely empty.

"Huh, Ah don't see Big Mac's yoke harness up on there. He must still be out and about in the fields, checking on the scarecrows or something," Applejack said. "And here I thought I was the one who overworked 'round here."

Applejack didn't dwell on the thought much longer, as an enticing smell wafted over from the kitchen. AJ sniffed at the air, it must

have been apple crisps and hay fries for sure. Her stomach let out a plaintiff groan, and Applejack hastened her way down the hall and into the kitchen.

The farm pony's sense of smell was as honest as she was. Granny Smith was tending to the oven, and Apple Bloom already had a plate ready in Applejack's usual spot at the table. "Ah swear, Granny, Apple Bloom, them there orchards of ours are getting bigger by the day. It's getting to be impossible goin' from A to B anymore without thinkin' mah legs might fall off!"

Granny Smith beamed proudly at her, taking the rest of the apple crisps out of the oven. "That's around a century's worth of Apple Family loving and dedicated cultivation there, Applejack. Apple Bloom, did ya get AJ's plate ready? Your sister must have worked up one durn heck of an appetite out there. I'd reckon the same for ol' Big Mac, too."

"Yeah Granny," Apple Bloom answered, a tiny bit annoyed. "Ah told ya Ah did a whole two minutes ago! Big Mac's is on the way." She smiled again and turned to her older sister. "There you are, Applejack. Hope ya like the fries, Ah made them myself, with Granny's help of course."

"Well shoot, Apple Bloom, they're great!" Applejack said, trying a few fries for herself. As her stomach rumbled yet again, Applejack started digging into her plate, talking as she ate. "Ya keep this up, you might end up with one of them real fancy culinary cutie marks or some sort." A few crumbs shot out of her mouth and onto the table cloth. "Wouldn't that be somethin'!"

"Yeah, it would!" Apple Bloom grinned at the thought and returned to fixing a plate for Big McIntosh, who was still absent. "Hey, did you happen to see Big Mac out there?"

"Nah," Applejack answered, wiping her muzzle clean and going to the fridge for a cup of milk. "Ah was yonder in the north orchard all day long. Didn't see hide nor tail of him."

"Ah'm right here," Big McIntosh said, his large form appearing in the doorjamb of the kitchen's backdoor that stood ajar. Making his way to the front room to remove his harness and return, he seemed even more beat than Applejack.

"Have a seat anywhere, Big Mac!" Granny Smith said, as Apple Bloom set his plate down and started helping her to make theirs. "You hungry for some apple crisps? Apple Bloom made the fries."

"Eeyup." Big Mac answered, sitting down next to Applejack. "These belong in a fancy five-star restaurant, Apple Bloom."

Apple Bloom's grin grew wider. Applejack and Granny Smith smiled as well, but the former's fell considerably when she noticed her older brother in detail.

"Big Mac, just what in tarnation were ya doing all day? Ah may be a mite tired, but you look as if you've been holding up a barn all day!"

"Nope. Darn fruit bats. They've been infesting the trees and the

insides of some of the silos again."

"Ah keep telling ya, child. Stop burning all that energy fighting them there critters, and just get Fluttershy to take care of em' somehow," Granny Smith said with concern.

Big McIntosh sighed. "Sorry, Granny. Ain't no way, no how we're gonna dump that problem on her. Ah've got it in hoof."

His quiet but stubborn tone suggested to Granny Smith that arguing with him over the matter for the umpteenth time would end up nowhere. "Fine, we'll have it your way fer now, Big Mac."

"Eeyup."

Granny inwardly shrugged it off for now and sat down with Apple bloom, and everyone began eating together. The food was delicious, and despite her stomach finally going quiet, Applejack was still being bothered by something. She downed the rest of her milk and set the glass down loudly. The sound caught everyone's attention.

"Dang nabbit! Now Ah wish there were some way we earth ponies could just move faster or save us the walking time, somehow! We got strong legs, but they weren't built for speed in mind. Grandpa's old tractor stopped working when me and Big Mac were still learning to talk. What ever became of them newfangled automobiles decades ago, Granny?"

Granny Smith paused eating and got a nostalgic twinkle in her eye. "Why, that's a mighty good question there, Applejack. Ah believe I was about Big Mac's age and still high divin' when that unicorn Ford River unveiled some ones in Fillyadelphia that supposedly anypony could afford to buy."

"Just anypony?" Big Mac asked.

Granny scratched at her silvery mane, panning through an ocean of old memories. "Yes indeed, it was supposed to be as big as the ol' Equestrian railroad. Only trouble was, it was a lot simpler just using buggies to get your stuff around, and trains or big zeppelins for the long winding trips. Course, unicorns have their fancy magic and pegasi with the natural flight, as well."

Applejack and Big McIntosh listened with interest, but Apple Bloom resembled her friend Sweetie Bell whenever Cheerilee would ask them all a math question she already knew the answer to.

"It never really caught on, at least that's what Ah'd reckon based on the history books," Apple Bloom declared. "Usually only really wealthy ponies and the Army has em' nowadays. That's what Miss Cheerilee said, anyhow. They're as rare as silver bits!"

"Fascinating," Applejack remarked, rubbing her muzzle. "It'd still be nice to be able to zip around here in an automobile faster than just hoofin' it all the time. We need our leg strength and energy for apple bucking, not running darn marathons! Not that Ah couldn't run one, no sweat," Applejack added quickly.

"Eeyup." Big McIntosh nodded, before yawning.

"Maybe you'll luck out someday and find a working one for sale. Well now, looks like it's time to hit the hay, before one of us four passes out on the way to our darn beds!" Granny Smith said, looking out the window at the now starry sky.

"Tell ya what, y'all go head on up without me. Ah can clean up everything, Ah'm a mite tuckered out, but mah eyelids aren't heavy yet!" Applejack said, picking up the empty plates. Apple Bloom and Big Mac shrugged and headed upstairs. Granny Smith insisted she could take care of it and that AJ had done enough work today, but the farmer wouldn't have none of it.

Ten minutes later, Granny Smith was already snoring away in her room, and Applejack was standing in a now spotless kitchen. Even the plates drying on the counter seemed to sparkle clean. Satisfied, Applejack decided to head out onto the front porch and do some stargazing before retiring off to bed herself.

The pegasi had left a clear night sky for the region, and several constellations were visible above. Applejack noticed that one of the shooting stars seemed to be moving in an odd fashion, but she thought nothing much of it. As she finally started yawning and began to make her way in side, she heard a distinct whistling sound issuing from high in the air.

Her emerald eyes were drawn to the sky, and they widened as Applejack beheld something rarely ever seen. The oddball star, likely a meteorite or comet burning in the atmosphere, was making a beeline straight for Sweet Apple Acres!

Applejack was about to shout and warn everyone, but the meteor was coming in too fast to do anything but simply duck for cover.

In the span of four heartbeats, the meteor accelerated into a downward arc that pointed it straight to the ground. The mysterious celestial object slammed straight into empty field of grass beside the carrot farm. Applejack paused for a moment, waiting for someone to shout and inquire as to what the heck just happened.

A whole minute past. Still, the air remained quiet save for the chirping of crickets, the rustling of tree branches, and gentle whisper of a faint breeze.

There was also the crashed meteor, of course. Small plumes of steam were billowing from its epicenter. The air crackled faintly in the aftermath of the intense friction, and it smelled for all the world like over-fried bacon in on a griddle.

Applejack shook her head in disbelief. "Bunch of heavy sleepers! Looks like Ah get the glory of the discovery all for myself. Twi will be so jealous when she gets a gander at this sometime soon!" She sniffed at the air and approached the impact site. "Who's been burnin' bacon out here?"

Bacon quickly fled her mind as new thoughts took root. Her eyes beheld a rather otherworldly sight as Applejack stepped across the hot charred ground. "Tarnation!" she cursed. "Just about took out our carrots, it's a darn good thing this space rock didn't topple any trees, and theâ€|wait a minuteâ€|land sakes! That ain't no space rock

at all!"

Instead of a sizeable crater and perhaps a few fragments of rock as Applejack had been expecting, the plumes of smoke and steam drew back to reveal a flat purple metal platform shaped vaguely like a hexagon, but with regular curvy edges. On the platform was a machine Applejack never thought she'd see anytime soon.

It sat on four wheels, obviously a vehicle. It's paint was forest green, and seemed to be brand new. Whatever had carried it down from the sky " perhaps the purple device " had obviously taken the force of the atmospheric entry in its stead, as the vehicle was in apparently perfect condition.

"An automobile, great. I spend all of dinner wishin' we had some good motorized transportation, mah legs are still killing me," she rubbed one her hind legs for a moment. "And a military vehicle crash lands in mah yard. Now how the heck does that work out?"

While pondering that very question, Applejack also took note of further details regarding the vehicle. For starters, it looked nothing like the design style of whatever had brought it down to earth. The styles clashed majorly, in fact. Secondly, it had to be military in origin. If the weapon that resembled a Gatling gun perched on its back wasn't a dead giveaway, the vehicle's utilitarian design certainly was.

Rails and grips were placed in convenient locations, the fender boasted a winch, and the suspension could be seen in the undercarriage exposed by the wheel well. A belt of heavy caliber ammunition was even fed into the gun, ready for combat at a moment's notice.

With her leg muscles aching to the high heavens from the day's work, and her curiosity mounting, Applejack trotted up to the driver's seat and clambered in with glee, careful not to turn anything on, as there were a myriad of computer displays and buttons on the dashboard alongside the steering wheel and pedals.

The windshield was low but offered a decent view of the ground in front. Applejack decided to steer clear of the gun in back, as she figured setting it off on accident would be instant bad news.

"Well who cares, anyway? They call it serendipity for a reason," Applejack mused, settling in to the seat and perusing the displays and various buttons. "Hopefully none of those buzz cuts or the Royal Guard will come to recover it anytime soon, stars know I wouldn't be able to lie if they asked me if Ah'd seen it. This seat is mite lovely for the back!"

Applejack noticed a portable computer device lying on the lap of the passenger seat, and she had the thought to investigate it as well. Above all, what she wanted to do most was actually find a way start the engine and see how it operates. The readout screens interfaces were in Equestrian, and would probably be of help in that endeavor.

"Shiny, fancy, and not to mention, sleek!" Applejack remarked. "Why, Ah'd reckon this must be some type of prototype vehicle the Army made; it seems like it came right out of a sci-fi flick. Those poor

pegasi who dropped it out of the sky like that probably lost their dang jobs."

Unfortunately, AJ's body had other plans beyond investigating the vehicle. The seat was surprisingly cozy, and the charged air around the impact zone had rapidly begun to cool. Applejack led out a loud yawn, reading a synchronized clock that was on one of larger screens, and set her hat down on the other seat next to the portable computer. By now, her bedroom and the farmhouse felt as if they were half a continent away.

"Ah, shucks. It'll all have to wait until tomorrow." Drowsiness made Applejack's eyelids grow heavy as she took one final look at the open air interior of the vehicle, smiling with wonder.

There would be plenty of time when Celestia is raising the sun to see if the vehicle from the sky could be driven. She stretched a little bit and admired the upholstery again, then soon passed into Luna's realm of dreams, while another oddly-moving star twinkled in the sky before vanishing over the horizon.

While asleep, Applejack occasionally murmured a word she had seen show up on the dashboard screens at least a dozen times. "Warthog, Warthog, Warthogâ€|"

* * *

><p>Big McIntosh had had a wonderful sleep all through the night, and it was now fast approaching dawn. However, just before the rooster could wake him as usual, something else did that instead.</p>

The earth pony awoke to what sounded like a heavy-duty engine. Somebody was also cheering and yeehawing up a storm.

In his stupor, Big Mac's mind came up with a number of surreal theories as to what it was, everything ranging from some winged train flown by a crazy wizard, to a nest of magical angry hornets that was almost as big as the house. Another part of him figured he most have still been dreaming, and Granny Smith's talk of old horseless carriages had simply rubbed off on him.

Shaking himself awake, Big McIntosh made his way downstairs, as he could already here someone moving around on the floor below. He soon discovered the kitchen, the parlor, and the other ground floor rooms deserted, which means they might have headed onto the porch.

Sure enough, Big Mac found Granny and Apple Bloom out front. They were gawking at something out in the orchard. Big Mac himself joined in as he followed their eyes, his mouth forming a surprised 'O'.

Someone was driving a green four-wheeled contraption up in their direction, kicking up a small cloud of dust and making a bit of racket. As it got closer, the Apples could make out the flowing blonde mane of the driver.

"Howdy, everypony!" Applejack called out happily. "Good mornin' to ya!" She revved up the engine of the vehicle before turning it off and climbing out. The hooves of her hind legs rang on the step rail as she went.

"What in tarnation?" Granny Smith exclaimed, rubbing at her eyes and performing a double take.

Applejack frowned, confused. "What's the matter, Granny?"

"AJâ€|" Granny began slowly. "Did you go out sleep walking and steal that thing from a military base last night? Ah swear, you're getting to be more like you're ol' grandpa was by the year, he got me that one old green army helmet o' mine the same way as an anniversary present long ago, Celestia bless his crazy soul."

"Ah'm afraid Ah did no such thing." Applejack's lack of hesitation indicated she was telling the truth. "This here Warthog came down from the sky in some type of fancy purple parachute-meteorite thingy. Ah think it could be some new prototype."

"Cars and motorized chariots designed to be fallin' from the sky? Them pegasi are getting to be more crazy by the decade," Granny Smith said.

"Warthog?" Big McIntosh asked, rubbing at his chin. "A pretty catchy name for an automobile."

"It's definitely big Army stuff," Apple Bloom observed. "Who do you suppose lost it?"

"As far as Ah know, this vehicle belonged to some agency in the military named the UNSC. Never heard of them myself, but apparently they don't want it anymore, else they'd have come back for it by now, with it being a new prototype you'd think. C'mon, I'll bring you around to the carrots and show ya where I found it!"

Applejack lead the others around to the carrot patch and showed them the scorched stretch of ground and the small, purple-violet landing device. Big Mac was muttering quietly to himself about the marred grass when they returned to the front of the farm house.

Seeing the Warthog even closer up, ignited Apple bloom's curiosity. "Ooh, Applejack, can we go for a ride in the thing down into the fields or somethin'?"

"Now hold up there, sally!" Granny Smith interjected. "You certain this here 'Warthog' is safe to drive in, Applejack? It looked kinda, what's the word, shaky."

Applejack walked up to the Warthog and leaned against its front left tire. "It handles mite well on most terrain. Just before the crack of dawn, Ah got some awesome air off a hill and it flipped, but it's as easy to flip back over as apple pie. Plus we can always detach that old gun in back and use her to haul apple baskets to n' fro if we ever need to."

"Alright, Applejack. Ah trust ya," Granny Smith said. "Just don't drive by the chicken coops, else y'all give them poor dears a right deadly scare!"

"Thanks, Granny."

"Hmm," Big Mac gave the Vulcan chain gun an appraising look, then

walked around to the front and stared at the built in winch and towing cable. "Eeyup. Ah'd reckon this would be a boon with felling those old dead trees stalking the western orchards."

Apple Bloom dove into the interior and fished out the data pad Applejack had left in the passenger seat last night, as well as a paper flyer she has somehow missed when investigating. "Hmm, 'Hog. It's Beauty and the Beast', " she said, reading the flyer's caption.

Everyone crowded around her, curious. The flyer was an advertisement for, sure enough, a vehicle resembling the Warthog. The titular Hog was purple and blue with shiny wheel rims, and lacked any distinct military features. It was driving rapidly down what looked like the street of a big city at night.

"Hey look, there's a smaller caption in the corner, sugarcube!" Applejack observed, and she read it out. "All 2553 models now available at your nearest AMG-licensed dealer. Huh, never heard of that company."

Granny Smith had picked up the data pad computer and started figuring out what it was for. "What's this blue picture frame thingy for?" She accidentally hit a button on the screen, and a voice recording started to play.

_ "This is the audio log of first officer Leonard Berger, freighter ship_ Handle With Care. _Let the record show, that Captain Sparrow is a goddamn idiot. He's been drunk on the job again, and he dares to berate me for forgetfulness? That's not to mention how he treats the rest of the crew around here, swaggering about the deck and giving orders in drunken slurs. I've had it! I'm taking that precious Warthog of his he fawns over, stowing it in that empty Covie drop pod we salvaged from Tribute, and blasting that mother out at the nearest rock the next night he so much as lifts a bottle! That'll show him, the stupid jerk!" _

"Erm, what did we just hear?" Apple Bloom asked, looking absolutely puzzled.

"Uh, maybe the Royal Air Force hired a sketchy airship company to transport their new gear. That's mah best guess, or maybe this thing is actually from an alien cargo ship full of little green ponies with antenna on their heads. Who's to say?" Applejack answered, taking the datapad from Granny Smith and setting it down in the Warthog then turning to Apple Bloom. "So, how 'bout that ride, little sis?"

"Oh boy!" Apple Bloom beamed and practically teleported into the passenger's seat. Applejack got in next to her, and then craned her neck to look at Big McIntosh.

"Hey Big Mac, got room for one more in back!"

Big Mac gave it a thought for a moment, then looked at Granny Smith. "Go ahead, Ah'm gonna go in and make breakfast," she said, heading into the house. "Ah'm too old to be gallivanting around the kingdom in shiny, fancy military hardware like you trendy youngsters these days!"

The large earth pony shrugged and trotted over to the rear of the

vehicle, taking a few tentative steps up and into the gunner's nest.

"You remember what Uncle Orange showed us from his time in the Royal Army," Applejack asked. "About how to properly use certain military gizmos?"

"Eeyup," Big McIntosh replied, cocking the Vulcan's mechanism. "Ah think these grips might have been meant for a minotaur, but Ah got it."

"Incredible, here all these years Ah thought we'd never ever need it. Ya ready, Apple bloom? Ah think we'll go take care of those trees Big Mac mentioned first. Then we can take a quick drive over to through the Whitetail Woods, those roads are perfect for this beauty!"

Apple bloom let out a cheer as all three of them sped off towards the western orchard. The dead trees loitering in that area had no idea what was coming for them.

Despite Applejack and Big Mac's warnings, Apple Bloom managed to convince them that firing the Warthog's gun to cut down the old trees wouldn't be too loud for her to handle. However, as soon Big Mac fired the first burst rounds into the trunk of a gnarled oak, Apple Bloom zoomed away screaming for the direction of the farmhouse, causing the older two siblings to burst into laughter.

They used the Vulcan and the vehicle's winch to take down the remaining trees, cleaned up all the bullet casings they could find, and then drove among the trees back to the farmhouse to check up on Apple Bloom and eat breakfast. She only agreed to go for another drive if they took the chain gun out from the back.

After doing all that, Applejack slowly drove the vehicle into the middle of the barn, where it would now remain every night.

* * *

><p>Over the next week, harvesting apples around Sweet Apple Acres became a breeze. Big Mac and Applejack took turns walking and driving between their usual organized system of harvesting zones — specific regions of orchards meant to be harvested at specific times — boosting productivity for the farm quite considerably.</p>

The Warthog was good for herding, too. Applejack would sometimes lead the family's collection of dairy cows out to the pasture with it. Winona always occupied the passenger's seat, loving the wind that blew into her face.

Inevitably, Sweet Apple Acre's new and improved productivity ran into a roadblock. The Warthog needed more fuel.

"Shoot!" Applejack said, looking up from the engine. The panel that ordinarily covered it was propped against a nearby tree trunk, alongside a couple of tools. "Ah've never seen anything like this before. It doesn't run on petrol, and it's obviously no steam engine like a locomotive." She sighed. "What do ya reckon, Big Mac? Ya think it's unicorn magic?"

"Twilight Sparkle," he responded simply.

This made AJ's eyes brighten, and she smiled. "Why, good idea brother! She'd be able to figure out how this thing works in no time!" She immediately got to work inviting Twilight over to the farm.

Sure enough, Twilight was able to figure out the engine type â€“ after burying the Apples in an avalanche of curious questions, of course.

As it turned out, it was a hydrogen engine, and a really advanced one, as Twilight had put it. What the Warthog needed all along to produce the necessary hydrogen fuel was simply water, which the jerry cans hanging from the back were actually intended for.

With that problem solved, productivity returned to the farm one again. However, a new problem soon took its place. Applejack was starting to grow stingy with the vehicle, often refusing to let Big McIntosh use it as well for entire consecutive days.

It was something Granny Smith took notice of it right quick, and it really began to bother her.

The trouble culminated one morning when AJ met up with Pinkie Pie, who had been coming in to visit for the day. Pinkie had arrived before Applejack completed her daily chores in the fields, and apparently had discovered the Warthog in the barn after Apple Bloom told her about it.

Applejack arrived to see the duo performing a continuous doughnut in the field, kicking a large ton of dirt up into the air.

"Hey, Applejack!" Pinkie Pie shouted with glee from the driver's seat. "The seats in this thing are bestest thing ever!"

"Pinkie Pie, Apple bloom, what are you doing in my 'Hog? You better get up and off that thing before ya break something!" Applejack hollered at them.

Sensing her friend's tone of voice, Pinkie Pie stopped the Warthog immediately and got out, looking concerned. "You alright, Applejack? You look like a goofy steamed tomato!"

"Lands sakes, no Ah'm not!" Applejack yelled. "Why didn't you ask me permission before getting into that thing, Ah found it first, and that means only Ah get to drive it!"

"Applejack! Stop being a hog with the '_Hog_!'" Applebloom fumed. "What's the matter with you, anyhow?"

Applejack ignored her sister and just glared at the both of them. Pie's mane had straightened out and she looked quite upset by the time Granny Smith emerged from the house. She had been able to hear the entire thing.

"Now Applejack, Ah think you've gotten too hung up over this darn vehicle! It's nice and all that you care for something so much, but dang it, you're getting' to be like a miserly old dragon watching over his horde!" Granny Smith said firmly, a worried frown pulled across the ordinarily cheerful wrinkles of her face.

"Ah'm not no greedy dragon, Granny. It's just this here beauty fell from the sky, and it makes me happy!" Applejack argued. "Why should Ah just up and stop using it?"

"Dang nabbit, Applejack! We're not asking ya to not ever use it again, Ah'm askin' ya to share it with your brother." Granny Smith looked at Pinkie Pie. "And your friends too. You're acting like Filthy Rich when he was just a lil' whippersnapper!"

Applejack let Granny Smith's words sink in as she looked from her to Pinkie Pie and Apple bloom. "Ah, horse feathers, you guys. Ah'm truly sorry, Ah got way too carried away."

She took off her Stetson hat, looking solemn. "Ah guess with the whole idea that we didn't have to be bothered anymore by having to walk so far, and what with the farm being more productive, my entire sense of kindness just went south for the winter, somehow. It's everyone's Warthog, not mine."

"Thanks, sis." Applejack said, smiling in relief. "Glad to have ya back down to earth."

"Ah'm glad you could see it that way, Applejack." Granny Smith said, smiling as well. Applejack returned their smiles. "Let's go, Apple Bloom, there's always more chores to do!"

"Ah, darn it!" Apple Bloom whined, following after her.

Pinkie Pie was already grinning at Applejack as she approached her. "You have my apologies, sugarcube. I didn't mean to bark at ya. We can take that amazing hunk of metal over there for a spin, anytime you'd like. My treat."

"Oh, that's ok, Applejack! Let's go get the girls, find some scooters or something, and take the Warthog and a have super-duper fun race around the Unicorn Range!"

Applejack chuckled, "That'd be nice, Pinkie. Just let me fetch some fuel from the well, first."

"This thing runs on water?" Pinkie Pie asked in disbelief.

"You betcha, sugarcube.'

"That's amazing!" Pinkie Pie exclaimed, jumping into the passenger's seat. "So do I!" She paused for a moment and tapped at her nose. "Well, that and perhaps a little bit of sugar."

The farm pony smiled at her with an eyebrow raised. "A little bit?" They had taken off and were heading down the road out of Sweet Apple Acres.

"Yeah. Hey, you know what I wonder about?"

"What?"

"Every time my friend Master Chief drives one of these through a place, super-heroic ultra-awesome spectacular music plays from everywhere! How come we're in one and everything's all quiet except

for the engine?" Pinkie Pie looked around herself suspiciously.
"There must be some kind of conspiracy going on here!"

* * *

><p>As another evening came and the Acres went quiet save for the sounds of the night, the inhabitants settled in for bed. All except for one, that is. A single dark figured slowly crept its way into the barn under the cover of night, careful not to make any noise that could wake up the cows and arouse suspicion.</p>

Their hooves padded quietly across the hay-littered floor, carrying a surprising grace to their steps. Within a second, the figure spotted their quarry. Situated right in the heart of the barn, moonlight glinting off its polished army-green surface, sat the Warthog.

Applejack had left it there, as per routine, after her and Pinkie Pie had taken it out to race their friends across Western Equestria. They had ended up scaring, confusing, or waking up every town and hamlet between Ponyville and Tall Tale in the process. No irritated military ponies had showed up to retrieve their allegedly missing gear in that span of time, either.

Approaching the idle military vehicle, the figure reached out a foreleg to touch its hood. A sudden noise forced them to pause abruptly, and their head snapped to the sound's location to investigate.

It was only a snoring cow. She was moving about in her sleep, and had bumped against her stall door. "Oh, don't cha know?" the cow murmured dreamily, emitting a long draw out snore.

Immediately concluding that no threat of being caught was hanging in the air and the coast was clear, the figure returned their attention to the Warthog. They affectionately ran their hoof against the surface of its hood, savoring every second of the feeling of its smooth metal against the force of their touch.

"You're all mine now, little lady," the pony said softly, climbing into the driver's seat. He started the engine, and the displays on the dashboard shined blue, illuminating Big McIntosh's hydrogen engine rumbled beneath him. He was smiling, as if meeting an old friend for the first time in years. "Eeyup, Ah missed you too."

2. Bonus Chapter

Moonlight was still hanging over the land as Big McIntosh cruised across the grassland and fields between the town of Appleloosa and Froggy Bottom Bog in Applejack's Warthog.

Normally, Big Mac was of the quiet and composed type. Tonight however, the earth pony was filling the air with whooping and cheering, as well as a considerable cloud of dust. The Warthog had managed to charge through the undergrowth of the Everfree Forest with relative ease.

With many ponies happening to still be awake in Dodge Junction and Appleloosa, it was likely that Princess Celestia or Luna would be

hearing of noise complaints from Big Mac's joyride the following day. As noisy as it was, the Hog couldn't possibly match the ruckus and rumpus that was about to come from high above.

McIntosh first noticed it in the corner of his windshield. It looked like a meteorite, but the object was travelling in a manner too odd to be a normal piece of falling cosmic debris

"What in tarnation?" Big Mac murmured to himself. Curious, he immediately spun the vehicle around and attempted to track the incoming object.

The 'meteorite' was descending from the sky like a brick. McIntosh could see the object in clearer detail as it neared the ground. It was a large, grey, metallic box-shaped structure, and it appeared to have been detached from a larger object. Strangely enough, it also seemed to be slowing itself down. Big Mac reached where he guessed it would crash, just as it did so.

Despite having decelerated, the object's impact still kicked up an almighty dirt cloud, one which Big Mac felt shake his bones and had to impatiently wait to pass by before investigating the things beyond. He was amazed when he was finally able to get close and see for himself what had fallen to earth.

In fact, McIntosh was so surprised that he set up camp around the Warthog for the rest of the night, just to keep watch over the site and everything in it.

In the morning, Big Mac decided to reveal his startling discovery. He brought Braeburn and the rest of the nearby Apple family, as well as his sisters over to look at his findings. With half of Appleloosa swooning over the Warthog, and the other half chatting up a storm over Big Mac's find, the Royal Guard was soon called in to officially look into the matter. The large gathering also managed to attract Pinkie Pie, who arrived there in tumbleweeds blowing from the East.

"So, let me get this straightâ€¦all this fell from the sky?" A guard asked with a hint of disbelief, peering over the site.

"Eeyup," Big McIntosh replied. "Like a meteorite that's drank too much fermented cider."

"Well saddle me up and call me a draft horse, cousins!" Braeburn exclaimed, following the Royal Guards' gazes. "This here must be a full up arsenal you've up and found!"

"Eeyup."

"Ah'm positively dumbfounded," Applejack said. "One falling from the sky made no sense to begin with, but nowâ€¦" she chuckled. "Ah dunno what to say, fellas."

Spread out in front everyone was a collection of twelve idle Warthogs tied down on a large metal platform, still neatly arrayed in rows of three despite their tumultuous arrival. Off to the right, five smaller four-wheeled vehicles stood. Lurking in back was the imposing figure of a main battle tank, its turret and chassis secured in a manner similar to the Warthogs'.

In addition to the mass of vehicles, several stacks of heavy-duty crates, jerry cans, and barrels were lined up on the platform as well, nestled under cargo netting.

Some of the Warthogs had alternating paint jobs from the standard forest green Applejack's Warthog possessed. A rather eclectic group must have claimed ownership of them previously, as some sported everything from flames to rainbows. One had the words "Viva la Meta" spray-painted on its hood. In addition to the custom paint, some of the Hogs had additional armor welded on, and others possessed a turret with a single slender barrel instead of the standard tri-barrel chain gun on Applejack's.

"What the heck are these vehicles called, exactly?" Another guard asked. She and two others approached the nearest Warthog, appraising it.

"Warthog," Applejack answered proudly.

Braeburn looked perplexed. "Warthog? Looks mite more like a Puma to me."

"Nope." Big Mac replied.

"Just a Warthog." Apple Bloom said with a grin.

"Miss Applejack?" a Royal Guard asked, catching her attention.

"Hmm?"

"We found something. Since you apparently have experience with these things, can you identify this?" the stallion held up a data pad.

Recognizing the device, Applejack took it and nodded. "Yessir, that there's a mini computer."

"Portable computers? What are these from, the future or somethin'?" One of the other guards asked.

"Time travelers!" Pinkie Pie blurted out.

"We're still at a loss." Apple Bloom responded, shrugging.

Applejack activated the data pad, expecting to hear another recording.

Sure enough, an audio log began playing. The speaker sounded heavily inebriated, and spoke with a discernible slur. "CapitÃ;n Eduardo Sparrow, freighter ship_ Handle With Care. So, first mate Hamburgers wants to play the mutiny card, does he? Well this old captain still has a few tricks up his sleeve. Not only did I remove the 'L' from the ship's motor pool signs, I also jettisoned the entire aft hold, so all their Insurrectionist contraband: Mongooses, that old Elephant, Sweet Williams, Warthogs, HAVOK nuke, hit Mariachi singles, et cetera, are headed straight down to that uncharted backwater right about now. That'll show those pinchazos not to screw with El GorriÃ³n! Waitâ€|Mariachi hit singles? Oh crap!"

The recording stopped abruptly. Before anyone could say anything, one of the guards accidentally activated something. All the radios in the Warthogs began blaring foreign-sounding music. "Gah, what is that? It sounds like what those Burronisian Donkey bands play over in Foaledo!"

"Yeahâ€|this is something the bloody army should handle," The guards' commanding officer said quickly, putting some distance between him and the vehicles. "We're just gonnaâ€|go now." His comrades were grimacing and desperately trying to cover their ears. "Toodles!"

All the guards galloped off in random directions or took to the skies. As they fled, the foreign vocals and guitar made way for rather whimsical and upbeat accordion music. Big Mac, Braeburn, and Apple bloom rushed towards the Warthogs, trying urgently to figure out how to turn the music off. Pinkie Pie seemed to be enjoying it.

Applejack meanwhile, simply shrugged, and curiously began poking through the crates and barrels, with Pinkie joining her. Most of the non-crates were just water, but the crates themselves yielded fascinating finds, like a giant soccer ball, assorted household items, cartons of cigars, and military hardware.

Big McIntosh and the others failed to turn the music off, but Applejack found something that put a grin on her face. She stood up and carefully brandished a shotgun, pointing it at open air away from anyone and imagining she were a sheriff in an old Western, trailing outlaws out on the wide San Palomino desert.

"Put em' in the air before Ah smoke ya, dirt bags!" Applejack shouted at the imaginary desperados, dramatically raising the brim of her hat and glaring.

"Look, there's some! I see some outlaws!" Pinkie Pie joked, grinning and pointing at a clump of tall cactuses a few feet away. Applejack nodded and trained her sights on the nearest one, firing a shell. The cactus exploded, and the sound caused everyone to jump in surprise. Applejack started laughing at how startled a lot of them looked.

"Whoa there, Applejack!" Braeburn said, smiling but looking a bit flustered. "Remind me never to get on the business end of one of those in the future."

"Woah, that almost beats my Party Cannon!" Pinkie Pie observed. "Poor cactus."

Applejack lowered the gun and looked back at the cargo platform inquisitively. "Ah wonder what other surprises this thing has in store."

A silhouette of a massive treaded vehicle appeared through the clouds. The massive tank-like vehicle landed awkwardly twenty feet away from Applejack, covered in a ton of dirt and sand but otherwise looking in mint condition.

"Surprise!" Pinkie Pie shouted gleefully. She ran over to the large vehicle and climbed aboard, examining it.

Soon, the Royal Army arrived. Three jeeps and a transport carriage pulled by pegasi sped towards the area from the direction of Appleloosa.

"What in Tartarus' Kitchen is going on here?" General Buckshot demanded, viewing the scene from under his massive green helmet. Only his stubbly muzzle and a lit cigar were visible underneath as he and a pair of Military Police climbed out of the lead jeep, turning the engine off. His coat was roughly the same color as the sandy ground he stood on. "We got word from the Guard that military property has supposedly been fallin' from the sky!"

Accordion music had stopped and now a lively tune consisting of trumpets, guitars, violins, and a few other instruments began to play. Two squads of infantry poured out of the carriage and stood at attention. Some of them took off their green and silver helmets, unequipped their rifles, and scratched at their manes when they saw the rows of sleek military vehicles.

"Sir," Applejack began. "You heard right, this here must be the second time we've had something of this type fall out of the sky. Ah thought maybe these belonged to the army or the Royal Air Force, something new your eggheads whipped up or some such thing, and some pegasi botched their deliveries."

"Maybe ma'am. That would be on a need to know basis. With that said, I personally don't bother with trying to understand the ways of the egghead."

"Mister General, what'cha going to do with all this stuff?" Apple Bloom asked, noticing the two stars on the stallion's helmet and assorted decoration on his uniform.

"Well, first thing we'll do, is get all these here heavy munitions away from you civvies, that's for sure." Buckshot took a look at the massive treaded tank behind Applejack, as well as the vehicles on the platform. "I don't think you farmers are going to need mechanized cavalry anytime soon, or anti-aircraft guns."

Before Applejack could respond, Pinkie Pie interjected. "Hey guys, look! I found a giant funny looking drinking flask!" she declared enthusiastically, poking her muzzle into one of the giant crates and pulling out an object shaped like an artillery shell.

"Uhhâ€¦nope." Big Mac replied nervously, instinctively taking several steps back from her, pulling Apple Bloom with him.

General Buckshot's green eyes bugged out from under his helmet when he noticed the symbols painted on the side. Applejack and all the other nearby ponies followed suit, recognizing the symbols as well. "Dear alicorns almighty! That's no friggin flask!"

Most of the Appleloosans began leaving the area, Braeburn included. Pinkie Pie herself looked confused for a second, but then she finally noticed what they were talking about.

"Ooh. So it's kind of like a rainbomb, or fireworks!" Pinkie gently set the explosive back in its case. "I thought it looked a bit too silly to drink hot cocoa out of!"

"Yeah Pinkie, a really, really big firework." Applejack said, sweating from the ordeal. She sighed with relief as the party pony shut the container and moved away from it. One of the squad of soldiers quickly took her place and began guarding the bomb.

"That's it, we're getting all this back to base, pronto!" General Buckshot ordered. He puffed some smoke from his cigar, and then put it out on the ground. "Call for heavy lift gear; secure, and move out!" While Buckshot's radio operator got to work, Applejack caught the earth pony general's attention again, waving him over. She whispered something in his ear.

"Uh huh," he said slowly. "Alrightyâ€|" She continued whispering. "Ok. Wait, Element of Honesty? Well I'll be damned!" Applejack finished and smirked at him.

"Alright, since you Apples seem to be the trustworthy sort, and have a fine taste in music," he smiled at the Warthogs, whose foreign music was ending with a passionate guitar solo. "Ya can keep these Hogs as ya call em'. All the other vehicles too, even the tank. Princess Twilight can add em' to her armory, maybe. But, only after we've checked for any more weapons of mass destruction. And, I want you to promise to make sure that that pink one of yours doesn't ever touch anything more powerful than a firecracker, ya hear?"

"You have mah word, General," Applejack assured. "Thanks for understandin'!"

"Of course. You owe the Royal Army one fresh apple pie and a barrel of cider, now." Buckshot called back, following the Military Police to begin inspecting the platform.

Applejack nodded and waved, then joined Apple Bloom, Pinkie, and Big Mac at their own Warthog. "Time to go home," she paused. "Uh, this here only seats three. Somepony's gonna have to sit in the other's lap, unless ya want to wait until another 'Hog is cleared to drive."

"I got shotgun!" Pinkie Pie cried.

End
file.